Programme (BEP) referred to above, the proposal for opening of branches at rural centres identified by the banks within their service area and received through the concerned State Government duly recommended are considered by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on merit. On this basis, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allotted 264 centres to banks for opening their branches in rural areas. As regards, semi-urban centres, the banks have freedom to open branches at the centres of their choice within the quota allotted to them on all India basis. No Statewise quota has been allotted for the purpurpose of opening branches at semi-urban centres. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that it has allotted 1290 semi-urban centres for opening of branches in the country. In respect of Urban/Metropolitan/Port Town centres, allotments are made on the basis of centres identified by the Working Groups constituted at Regional Offices of Reserve Bank of India (RBI). As per information received from Reserve Bank of India (RBI), 985 centres have been allotted to banks by Reserve Bank of India in the country for opening branches in such areas. Under the current Branch Expansion Programme (BEP), banks have freedom to open specialised branches viz. Industrial Finance, Overseas, SSI/SIB, NRI Treasury branches etc. after ensuring adequate business at the centre. Such proposals are not required to be referred to Reserve Bank of India for approval. Proposals other than these which do not conform to Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s norms for specialised branches are, however, to be referred to RBI for prior approval. The banks are required to open the branches at the allotted centres by the end of Branch Expansion Programme (BEP) 1990-95 i.e. 31st March, 1995. However, the opening of branches at the allotted centres is subject to availability of basic infrastructural facilities like availability of suitable permises, all weather roads, tele-communication centres etc.

Import of consumer goods

86. SHRI GUNDAPPA KORWAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government propose to liberalise import of consumer goods under the instructions of World Bank; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) and (b) Review of the Export and Import Policy is an on-going and continuous process and changes are made from time to time as and when considered necessary.

Modified value-added tax

87. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a massive scam in which premier industries in the Hosur industrial area (Karnataka) took advantage of the modified Value added Tax (MODVAT) to cheat the Excise Department has been busted; if so, the details thereof and the amount involved; and

(b) what steps have been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) The detections indicated that in these cases Modvat credit had been availed of, *inter-alia*, on inputs/documents which were not covered by the legal provisions. The estimated amount of Modvat credit taken wrongly or irregularly is approximately Rs. 1.9 crores. These cases are under investigation or adjudication.

(b) Special Modvat audits and more intense anti-evasion checks are being organized to detect evasion of duty by unscrupulous assessees. Simul-

taneously, use of computer software is also being made to detect availment of wrong credits or double credits. Besides, interaction with the assessees including seminars and open house discussions are being organized with a view to educating them about the requirements under the law.

Setting up of an insurance regulatory Authority

88. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a 30 member U.S. delegation has asked India to open up its insurance sector to the global expansion of the business, if so, what are its ramifications;

(b) what are the reactions of the Ministry in the light of Malhotra Committee recommendation on such a proposal;

(c) what extra benefits are anticipated therefrom; and

(d) whether Government are considering a proposal for establishing an Insurance Regulatory Authority, if so, what would be its functions and how far it would benefit our Insurance Sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) The Trade Mission consisting of U.S. insurance companies which visited India from 28th January to 4th February, 1995 under the auspices of the International Insurance Council (IIC), Washington, USA, did not hold any discussion with the officials of the Indian Government.

(b) to (d) The Government is yet to take a view on the recommendations made by the Malhotra Committee regarding the entry of private sector into the insurance industry and establishment of an Insurance Regulatory Authority.

Excise duty evasion cases against Hindustan Lever

89. MAULANA OBAIDULLA KHAN AZMI: Will the Minister FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the excise duty evasion cas detected against Hindustan Le during the last three years and th year;

(b) the action taken in each cas and

(c) the details of responsiblit fixed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN TH MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a to (c) Upto date information is nc readily available. The same is bein collected and will be laid on th table of the House.

Staff training Institute for AIR and Doordarshan

90. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK Will the Minister of INFORMATIO AND BROADCASTING be pleased t state:

(a) whether Government had proposal to set up a staff trainin institute for All India Radio an Doordarshan at Bhubaneshwar; and

(b) if so, the steps taken to set u the Institute?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THI MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AN BROADCASTING (SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A site measuring about 1(acres has been taken over and civi works have commenced thereon

Upgradation of Keonjhargarh relay Station

91. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK Will the Minister of INFORMATIO AND BROADCASTING be pleased t state: